ALL YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT 123, *but were afraid to ask:*

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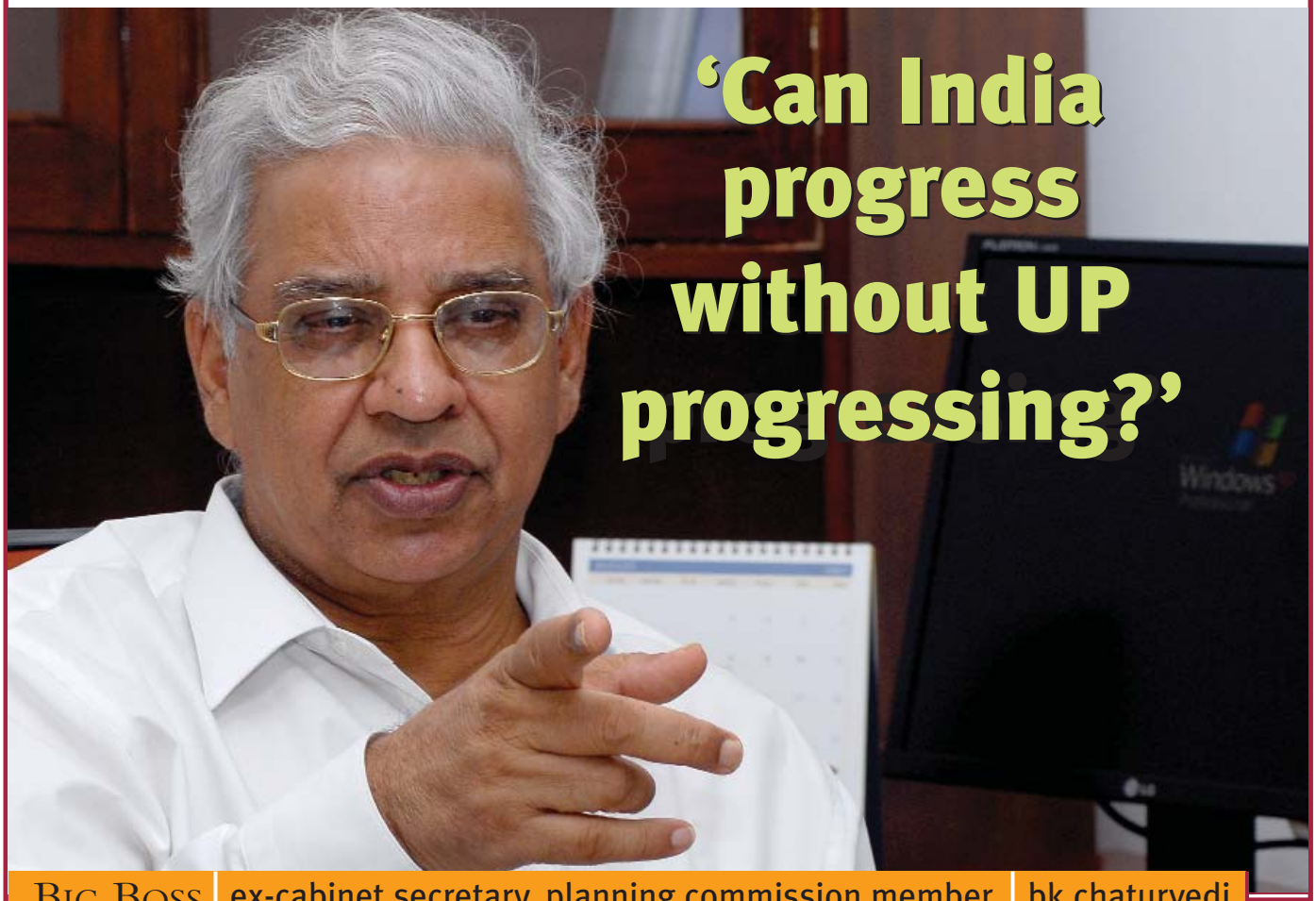
gfiles
INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT



'Can India progress without UP progressing?'

BIG BOSS | ex-cabinet secretary, planning commission member | bk chaturvedi

interviewed by ANIL TYAGI

Appointed Cabinet Secretary on June 14, 2004, BK Chaturvedi held the post till June 13, 2007. An IAS officer of the 1966 batch (UP cadre), he is a postgraduate in physics from Allahabad University with specialization in electronics and began his career as associate professor of physics in the engineering college of the same university. His teaching stint lasted over two years, after which he joined the IAS in July 1966. Chaturvedi has worked in the government of Uttar Pradesh in various posts, including District Magistrate of the backward district of Azamgarh in eastern UP. He was also DM of Allahabad. He has worked in the fields of agriculture, industrial development, urban development and finance, later specializing in finance and commerce. He was Secretary (Finance) in charge of taxation and budget to the UP government and also looked after industrial finance in the State Financial Organization.

In 1984, Chaturvedi moved to the Centre and worked as Executive Director, Trade Development Authority of India. He was also Chairman-cum-Managing Director, State Trading Corporation of India and worked for the Ministries of Textiles, Finance, Human Resource Development, and the Departments of Women and Child Development, and Elementary Education & Literacy. He pioneered the reforms in the insurance sector and initiated the process of gender budgeting. He is currently Member, Planning Commission.

gfiles: *What was the significant work done during your stint as Cabinet Secretary?*

BK Chaturvedi: We made efforts to change the dialogue about the bureaucracy, we made the system more transparent and people-friendly. The intention was to promote excellence in governance and disseminate best practices for adoption by the states. To bring stability of tenure and greater accountability,

→

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CLASS OF '48
Prints of the centrefold photo are available on request. Write to gfilesindia@gmail.com

and next issue...

THREATS TO INDIA'S IT INDUSTRY

PRABHAT KUMAR ON THE RTI

BIG BOSS

the All-India Service Rules were changed and tenures at senior levels were kept for long periods. Power, infrastructure, health and education were taken up for implementation. The broad approach was to make administration people-centric and to use e-governance for making services provided by the government hassle-free.

gfiles: *What does 'best performers' mean?*

BKC: It means that civil servants should strive for excellence in the areas allotted to them. Karnataka did extremely well in land reforms. Indore's transport service improved with innovations. Sitapur in UP took initiative in e-governance. Kerala's programme for the care of the poor won great admiration. Andhra's efforts in e-governance were generally accepted and appreciated.

gfiles: *What is e-governance?*

BKC: E-governance means providing services to citizens through electronic mode, making it hassle-free and removing corruption. The entire exercise is aimed at bringing automaticity and objectivity in provision of services. It also brings enormous transparency.

gfiles: *Do you think the bureaucracy guides the leadership or is it the reverse?*

PHOTOS: SHARAD SAXENA

'Bringing in a social order based on equity and justice is throwing up its own challenges. Command economy has given way to competition-based economy'

BKC: The support of the leadership is vital in initiating any innovation. In Andhra Pradesh, e-governance, extension of the IT system, investment in infrastructure were all initiated by the political leadership. In Delhi, the concept of *bhagidari* was brought in by the political leadership. The bureaucracy implemented the ideas of the leadership.

gfiles: *Do you think the bureaucracy at present is skilled and up to expectations?*

BKC: Yes. Earlier, the civil service did not use ITand other modern techniques extensively. With the introduction of extensive training, the scene has changed enormously. The young generation is performing well in IT, finance, communication, defence and a whole range of other sectors. The idiom of the administrative system now is changing from "mistrust" to "trust" of the citizens.

gfiles: *What impact has economic liberalization had on the bureaucracy?*

BKC: A new breed of competent bureaucrats has sprung up. Our management ability is superb and up to the market expectations. Both national and international markets value them.

gfiles: *But is the bureaucracy in tune with the new challenges after liberalization?*

BKC: Absolutely. The younger officers are extremely competent and skilled.

gfiles: *If you are a collector of a remote district today, how would you compare the administrative scenario with that about 30 years ago in terms of duties, responsibilities and challenges?*

BKC: The common man's expectations of the collector were far more earlier. Schools, health services, education, power were the basic issues. In the last decade, incomes have been rising. Bringing in a new social order based on equity and justice is throwing up its own challenges. The command economy has given way to competition-based economy with far greater involvement of the private sector. Today, India has arrived. Its infrastructure has changed. The collector of today works in an entirely different atmosphere.

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gfiles
INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT

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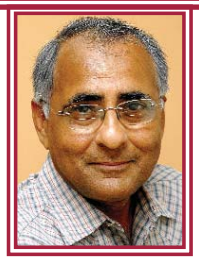

gfiles was uniquely designed to engage its readers' attention in the entire content of the magazine. In attempting to cater to the specific reading needs of our target audience we wanted to ensure that we fit the niche we have carved out for ourselves. One test of this was the parameter that while most readers could *flip* through general magazines and newspapers, they should *read* gfiles from cover to cover. The idea was to convert a *flippership* into a *readership*.

We promised that we would achieve this by cutting through rumour mills and hearsay and help India's vast body of civil servants reach out to one another, share and become acquainted with their issues, practical problems, everyday challenges and the intricacies of their working environment.

So, how far have we travelled in this direction in the six months that we have been around? Pretty far, I believe. One measure of this success is that through our pages, some of the seniormost officials who have been or are currently involved in running our nation's day-to-day governance have begun to engage with one another in serious debate on how to innovate and move forward in a truly global perspective that puts India's needs first.

In our July issue, former UP Chief Secretary and now Secretary-General of the Rajya Sabha Yogendra Narain made the memorable suggestion that when 65 per cent of the population lives in rural areas, there is a need to create a separate Indian Administrative Rural Service. In our current issue, former Cabinet Secretary BK Chaturvedi, now a member of the Planning Commission, who is featured in our "Big Boss" department, disagrees completely. And he has other solutions and recommendations that make for compelling reading.

The point is, gfiles has ignited serious debate, and those speaking from different rostrums are some of the most powerful men and women – with no axes to grind – who have headed and guided the "steel frame of governance". Our major feature in this issue is the Indo-US nuclear deal and the 123 Agreement. The subject has been done to death. We are weary of the information overload. Even at the risk of being blamed for me-too-ism, we are running six pages on this done-to-death subject. We believe we are telling the story differently – with the participation of senior civil servants and diplomats – from the run of the mill. The editors are convinced that while our readers are now *flipping* through the mass circulation magazines and papers on this subject, they will be *reading* this issue of gfiles with special interest.

INDERJIT BADHWAR
Editor-in-Chief

LETTERS It was a pleasant surprise to see the CAG talking to the media. It appears that all the good work done by the CAG is going down the drain for want of punitive action against the culprits.
Dinesh Lakhanpal, Film Producer, Mumbai

I did not know much about the CAG until the officer's interview appeared in your magazine. The CAG's performance in terms of ratio of cost to recovery – 1:11 – is commendable. Do other government departments have any such indicator to show their performance? I doubt it.
Krishan Bhardwaj, Engineer, New Delhi

I found gfiles highly informative and relevant. Keep it up!
Pulin B. Nayak, Director,
Delhi School of Economics

I have benefited immensely from the recommendations of Stock Doctor. I bought Vindhya Tele at Rs 95 and Bhilwara Spinners at Rs 13. They are currently quoting at Rs 135 and Rs 17 despite the market sliding heavily. Since markets are likely to go down further, should I hold or sell them?
SC Gupta, New Delhi

Stock Doctor: Both these recommendations are for the long term. Hold them.

The unobtrusive Samaritan

In 1975, during the Emergency, a young and dynamic scientist-turned-IAS officer was the District Magistrate of rural but politically volatile Azamgarh in UP. Ram Naresh Yadav, a political leader from Azamgarh, was in jail under MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act). He had a daughter of marriageable age and the local leaders requested the DM to release him so that her wedding could be held. Chaturvedi granted parole, and even made arrangements for the wedding without letting anyone know. When Emergency ended and the Janata Party came to power, Yadav became CM of UP. After being sworn in, a visibly moved Yadav made his first telephone call. It was to Chaturvedi, asking the DM to join his secretariat as Director, Public Relations.

gfiles: *What did you like most in those years?*
BKC: The level of honesty and integrity was much higher.
gfiles: *How can this be changed?*
BKC: We have to pay our civil servants well. Along with high salaries must come commensurate responsibility.
gfiles: *You conceived the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan as Secretary in the HRD Ministry. This is an ambitious programme but has come under the scanner. How do you react?*
BKC: It was a government programme and I had an opportunity to make my own contribution. The design of the programme was constantly improved and because of flexibility it has generally met its objective. However, the standards of learning and the drop-out rates continue to be cause for concern. These are issues which are to be addressed.
gfiles: *But the rural-urban gap is still widening. Our developmental efforts are largely focused on 43 towns of the country. We are neglecting rural India, resulting in more and more skewed distribution of income.*
BKC: The government has begun a programme, Bharat Nirman, to develop rural infrastructure and stimulate growth. This, along with investments in agriculture, rural development, and employment-oriented programmes will contribute to improving rural incomes. The process of development is complex. Today, the rates of savings in the economy has gone up to 35 per cent, an increase of 8-9 per cent in five or six years. This has led to a huge step-up in investments in the economy. Investments in infrastructure are rising from 4-9 per cent of the GDP by the end of the 11th Plan. All this will lead to more equitable distribution of income.
gfiles: *When the district develops, the state develops and then finally the nation. But in India it's the other way round.*
BKC: Districts cannot progress on their own without investments in the economy. It is only after major investments are made in infrastructure, education, health, transport, power and telecom that the country can develop.
gfiles: *The Vision 2020 document of the Planning Commission perhaps lacks vision. It says the focus in 2020 would be on the IT sector. However, I feel the focus will change IT. How do you look at it?*
BKC: The Planning Commission has a road-map for progress over a period of time. With change in technology, new strategies will come in. I agree we have to plan our long-term strategy based on fast-growing changes in modern science and technology. What will happen in 2020 in the IT sector, none of us can say.
gfiles: *The Rajya Sabha Secretary-General, Yogendra Narain, has envisaged the Indian Rural Administrative Services for the development of the real India.*
BKC: Yogendra Narain*ji* is a very senior and learned colleague of mine. I respect him but differ with his views. India has a very efficient civil service organization and we should not divide it into rural and urban. We should focus on improving management skills, upgrade technical know-how and make the existing system more effective, transparent and trustworthy. I recall how some of the sweeping reforms with which I was associated covered both the rural and urban areas. When we opened up the insurance sector, the Life Insurance Corporation of India board doubted its ability to meet competition from the new companies. Today, LIC is one of the biggest organizations and has grown faster in the last few years.
gfiles: *You are pro-liberalization but how does one regulate the regulator whose performance is dismal, be it IRDA, TRAI or SEBI?*
BKC: Indian regulators have performed well in the wake of economic liberalization. Many of these sectors are expanding rapidly with growing private investments. We add nearly 6 million telephones every month. Huge investments are coming into the economy from FIIs and other sources. A large number of new companies are being set up. It is important that a regulatory framework rise to the people's expectations.
gfiles: *You have recently joined the Planning Commission. What are the challenges before you?*
BKC: I am Member in charge of UP in the Planning Commission. I often wonder, can India progress without UP progressing at a faster rate? I am a strong votary of some of the large states with lower income getting a strong push so that we progress rapidly as a nation and take our rightful place.
gfiles: *UP has been stagnating on the developmental front for the past 15 years. Why?*
BKC: The state performed well till the Eighth Plan. Subsequently, the rate of growth has dipped. The investments in health, education, power, agriculture and industry were not forthcoming. The state has an inherent transport disadvantage. In the absence of any port, its export potential gets constrained. The state can develop faster if we are able to make investments in infrastructure and rapidly develop a social capital.
gfiles: *You have worked with both Manmohan and Vajpayee. How do they compare?*
BKC: Both trust senior civil servants. Dr Manmohan Singh is the architect of economic reforms. He has experience in all sectors of government and knowledge of international affairs and administrative systems. Vajpayee has enormous experience, a remarkable parliamentary career and knowledge about people of different parts of the country. g

'I am a strong votary of the large states with lower income getting a strong push so that we progress rapidly as a nation and take our rightful place'

UP, UP AND AWAY?

Whether poised, or rising or shining, India needs a re-think on leadership values

My parliamentary constituency is rural. It is crucial we bring growth across the board. No longer can India survive in terms of islands of prosperity. No longer can we afford to have regional inequalities of growth. Today, we have a divide. It is like an equator that runs across the centre of India. There is, for example, a north-south divide. The southern states are growing much faster than the northern states and if we don't arrest this divide it will lead to major issues in the future. There are state-state divides. There are divides within states with one portion being more prosperous than another.

A key parameter of qualifying as a superpower and galvanizing economic activity is to plant seeds of growth at a young age. When I tour my constituency, I like to dwell on a home truth: if a farmer does not receive requisite electricity, water, and fertilizer, the seeds he plants will never mature into a harvestable crop. Similarly, the seeds for our next generation need to be nourished with universal healthcare and education.

To groom leaders we must make them face challenges and ensure they fail as it is from failure that you learn

Fifteen years ago, the National Institute of Information Technology performed an experiment in rural Madhya Pradesh. They set up a makeshift podium beside a road in the middle of a village. On the opposite side they built a shack with a one-way mirror through which a scientist could observe the experiment. On the podium they set up a computer with a mouse and some basic software with video games like tennis and ping-pong. For three days a handful of village kids would stop near the computer and examine it. On the fourth day, five illiterate boys began playing around with the mouse and figured out that there were bats to strike with and balls that bounced from one side or the other. The next day they were playing the game! A day later they opened up the Hindi version of Microsoft Windows, but couldn't figure out the alphabets because they were illiterate. This was dramatic testament to the ability of Indian youth to be creative, to compete and succeed. That is the Indian USP. We thrive in any environment. We have a 25 million-strong diaspora in 115 countries. They have earned the respect of the world. They are the ambassadors of Brand India. Yet a third of India's children – 35 million of them – between the ages of six and 10 don't go to school. The average Indian employee has only an average education of 1.8 years.

There is no magic solution, no short-term solution. But there has to be new thinking, new articulation and new implementation. And we politicians have to stop thinking about what is going to happen to us at the end of four or five years. We are going to go back to the electorate. But we cannot escape from long-term plans. Whether we get re-elected or not we should think about positive steps we have taken that will sustain growth, development and equity for the long-range future.

Scindia with constituents: reality-savvy

I don't think leaders are necessarily only born. Leaders need to be groomed. Leaders need to be trained. Leaders need to be exposed. Leaders need to be given opportunities. You only become a leader when you have made many mistakes. Many of us are very apprehensive taking a call, taking a decision, taking up a challenge – what if we fail! But I believe that today if we need to groom leaders we need to ensure that we make them face challenges, make them face opportunities and make sure they fail as it is from failure that you learn.

Then there is the challenge of infrastructure. Look at ports, roads, highways. Our ports are clogged. Cost of production goes up by 30 per cent because of that one single roadblock. Because of bad roads our motor vehicle tyres survive only 50 per cent of their projected longevity. We have 100,000 MW of installed power capacity in our country and our requirement is 200,000 MW. How are we going to cross these hurdles? Only through new thinking. We need monumental, incremental changes.

Let us take the example of the recent airport privatization or airport development. It should have been done 20 years ago. Many times people ask me to describe India. I don't describe India necessarily as a tiger. We are not like the West, or Southeast Asian economies, which are way ahead of us in reforms, maybe sometimes too quickly. I describe India as an elephant. We take slow, sure steps. g

The author is a Congress MP from Madhya Pradesh. This article is adapted from a closed-door interaction with government employees

THE ABC OF 123

PIERCING THE

OVER the last month the media has carpet-bombed the nation with a combination of news, views, editorials, opinions, snap polls, and instapunditry about the Indo-US nuclear deal and its political fallout with such ferocity that we ordinary mortals feel shell-shocked. Our instinct right now is to head for bomb shelters to protect ourselves from the confusion raining down on our heads from television screens, Internet blogs, and newsprint. What's really going on? Who are the Good Guys, who are the Bad Guys? Is Uncle Sam trying to smother us in a neo-Imperialist bear-hug? What does the Left really want? Has our Prime Minister sold us out? Is the media taking sides? Is there a political collapse ahead? Will there be a mid-term poll? Are the BJP and Marxists pursuing a new Minimum Common Programme? Who is sleeping with which enemy? What is the geopolitical context of this entire controversy…?

The gfiles editorial team retreated into its private bomb shelter – our editorial office – to cogitate on some of these issues. We carried no

Have India's long-term energy security needs been sacrificed at the altar of business and economy?

by MG DEVASAHAYAM

AT the height of political turmoil threatening the survival of the UPA government, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh sent a strong message to parties opposed to the Indo-US civil nuclear cooperation. At an ONGC function on August 20, he said that nuclear power plays a crucial role in pursuing a sound "energy security" strategy. The implication was that the 123 Agreement would provide energy security for India and those who oppose it do not have national interest at heart.

This revelation was conspicuously absent in the PM's 3,516-word statement in Parliament a few days earlier stoutly defending the deal and there was hardly any mention of energy security. Now, unable to explain away the compromise of India's "strategic security", he has turned to "energy security" obviously as a subterfuge!

Since energy security through the nuclear route seems to be the *raison d'etre* of the 123 Agreement, this needs to be scrutinized closely. Energy security, or security of supply, is indeed a key component of energy policy. Since all economic activities require the use of energy resources, the continuing availability of energy at a price that protects economic growth is a genuine Indian concern.

If nuclear power is to provide energy security, it has to fulfil certain essential requirements – should be free from danger or injury, anxiety or fear, should have a critical mass and a guarantee that the obligation of uninterrupted fuel supply will be met.

Nuclear power is not free from danger or injury and it does not provide freedom from anxiety or fear. This is what

Continued on page 8

A READY REC

1. Who wants a mid-term poll?

Yes: BJP, Congress, BSP and others, Mulayam Singh trio.
No: CPI, CPI(M).
US wants the election.
Reasons
1. Continuation of Manmohan Singh and ouster of the Left.
2. To facilitate $100-billion investment by India in its nuclear facilities.
3. Maintain strategic presence in the Indian Ocean.

2. Why the truce?

Left – Scared that the citizens will paint it as the villain who prevented massive inflows of capital in a crucial segment of India's investment-starved power sector. They were willing to strike first but they did not realize that they were wielding a double-edged sword. Afraid of being tainted as an anti-national force that played into the hands of Pakistan and China by weakening India's nuclear options.
Congress – Nothing to lose. Can have its cake and eat it too.
BJP - All dressed up but nowhere to go. Perhaps Ronen Sen's "headless chicken" utterance describes best this party's plight.

3. Strategic mistakes:

Congress – Gave the needless appearance of desperation in its hurry to sign the deal, thereby bypassing Parliament and not coming clean earlier on some of the controversial clauses. Also failed the test of good political management because of lack of coordination between the government engaged in doing the deal and the party.
Left – Congenital, hidebound and anachronistic apathy

BAFFLEGAB

research documents or news clips. Debate and analysis – based on hard talk, common sense, experience, and a sense of history – ensued. Five hours later, we began to see with a little more clarity. We publish below the results of our cogitation. Because we are weary of information overload we did not want to burden our readers with copious copy and reams of tortuous intellectual bafflegab. They are simplified – but not simple – answers to basic questions being raised by the housewife, the man on the street, as well as bureaucrats who run the government. Their merit can be tested easily against ground reality. You may be accurate in describing this as a professionally-prepared ready reckoner – an unbiased and quickly digestible brief, call it a cram paper if you will! – prepared by a savvy district collector. In this package, we also include two articles with strong points of view – one by a former senior civil servant and the other by a former IFS ambassador – that we believe address the two core issues that concern India as a nation: energy security and executive accountability.

KONER

towards the US has blurred its vision at a time when the rest of the former Communist world is actively and aggressively engaging with America. Shows party is out of touch with ground realities. Not a vote-bank issue because voters in Communist states that want US investment are not in sympathy with their party on this issue. Cannot run with the hart and hunt with the hound.

BJP – Focused not on nuclear deal but on the Left in a bid to isolate it and then trap Congress into calling a snap poll. Cannot ride two horses at the same time. You wind up falling between the two or being dragged along the ground by one.

Other parties: Hooters. They believe that unbridled rhetoric like George Fernandes's "bullet in the head" remark, and raising decibel levels win votes. They don't. They create fears of anarchy in the public, and voters vote against anarchy.

US game plan: To pass off second-hand nuclear technology to India and bind India for the heavy water fuel for the next 20 years but today heavy water technology is outdated. Indian scientists have started using thorium.

4. Genesis of the deal:

Rajiv Gandhi era – 1991. Bought heavy water from France after denial by Russia of cryogenic fuel. France wanted to enlarge the deal by including supply of energy technology. The US was opposed to the entry of non-US suppliers. They successfully prevented NSG from entering into any deal with India. From 1991 to 1996 successive Prime Ministers were prevented from taking any decision concerning nuclear energy. The N-word was forbidden fruit. In 1998, the Indian government defied the US ban and carried out not one but six successful tests. The US was

Continued on page 8

The stand that government can ignore legislative scrutiny is a misguided assertion of 'executive privilege'

by NIRANJAN DESAI

REAMS of paper have been devoted to the merits and demerits of the merits and demerits of the 123 Agreement but no one, barring Justice BP Jeevan Reddy, has raised a fundamental Constitutional issue – the right of Parliament to examine and to ratify international agreements or treaties which have a fundamental bearing on all major aspects of the future of the country and its citizens.

Justice Reddy, a former judge of the Supreme Court and former Chairman of the Law Commission, has eloquently argued the issue in an op-ed piece titled "The nuclear agreement and Parliament" in the *Hindu*. He lays to rest the myth perpetuated by successive governments, including the present one, that the executive has a "prerogative power" immune from parliamentary scrutiny, in matters regarding entering into treaties and agreements with foreign countries and implementing of treaties, agreements and conventions with foreign countries. This is similar to the seminal issue underlying the Watergate scandal in the 1970s – President Nixon's invocation of the self-christened doctrine of "executive privilege" that hit at the principle of separation of powers. The US President was, in effect, trying to shield the executive from scrutiny by the legislature.

The *Asian Age* of August 14, 2007 quoted External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee saying that international treaties never come up for ratification before Parliament and that there can be "no occasion to have a substantive motion (on the 123 Agreement)" nor can there

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Energy security...

Continued from page 6

the MIT and Harvard University Report of 2003 says: "The prospects for nuclear energy as an option are limited by four unresolved problems: high relative costs; perceived adverse safety, environmental, and health effects; potential security risks stemming from proliferation; and unresolved challenges in long-term management of nuclear wastes."

The Oxford Research Group in its July 2007 Report endorses this and states: "For these risks to be worth taking, nuclear power must be able to achieve energy security and a reduction in global CO_2 emissions more effectively, efficiently, economically and quickly than any other energy source. There is little evidence to support the claim that it can, whereas the evidence for doubting nuclear power's efficacy is clear."

Nuclear power is costly, unsafe, risk-prone and ineffective in combating global warming. The US will not meet the basic obligation of uninterrupted fuel supply. The "deal" would cater to only about 10 per cent of India's energy needs at the best of times and as such does not have a critical mass. Some of India's top nuclear scientists have endorsed this view.

Let alone making India a "nuclear weapon state" as trumpeted by the "spin masters", the deal harms the country's "strategic security". The 123 Agreement only codifies technical rules of nuclear commerce. It is subject to the Hyde Act which includes provisions imposing restrictions on transfer of technology and barring access to dual-use technologies, thus denying India a full nuclear fuel cycle. The US President has to report to Congress every year on how India is complying with the provisions of the Hyde Act. The Act enjoins on the administration the prevention of fuel supplies and equipment from other countries to India if the US terminates the bilateral agreement.

The Indian agenda of energy security and strategic security is not served by the 123 Agreement. Then what and whose agenda does it serve? Obviously the American

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The real agenda seems to be energy security for the US! The Indian shift toward nuclear energy is in the best interests of America to secure its energy needs of coal, crude oil, natural gas

Ready reckoner...

Continued from page 7

forced to accept the dictum of if-you-can't-lick-'em-join-'em. More than the supply of nuclear fuel to India, the US strategy was to sabotage the conduct of successful experiments with thorium.

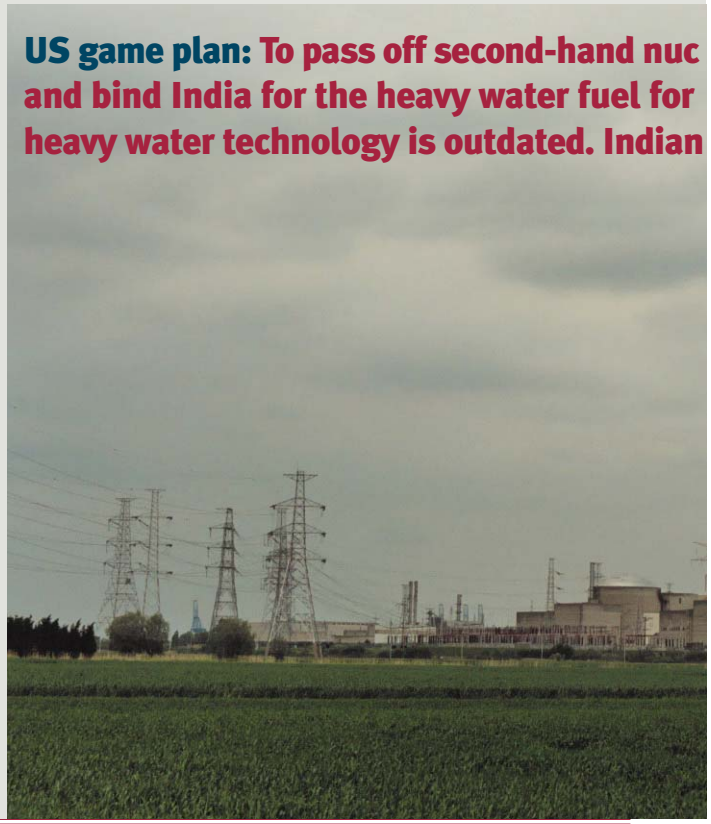
5. New compulsions:

US – Under the George Bush Doctrine, the US must continue as Big Boss of the unipolar world to safeguard the well-being of democracies and free economies. BUT: the fact is that socially, politically and economically, the US is on a slide, and realpolitik dictates that, in order to continue its pre-eminence, it must:

a) Find a ready market for the US economy.
b) Prevent a Russia-China-India axis.
c) Tilt the regional balance in favour of the US.

India – Paramount importance to meet energy requirements to sustain 9-10 per cent growth and prevent social unrest.

a) Cannot, therefore, antagonize America.
b) Growing economy requires outside direct foreign investments and low-tariff markets.
c) Leadership is still vulnerable to American tactics.
d) Cannot ignore the powerful Indo-US business partnership that is backed by some of the most powerful NRIs in the world who can influence international decisions in India's favour, including India's Communist-run states.


US game plan: To pass off second-hand nuc
and bind India for the heavy water fuel for
heavy water technology is outdated. Indian

6. Who engineered the truce?

Made possible by an understanding between Jyoti Basu and Sonia Gandhi.
a) Manmohan Singh was sidelined and Sonia took charge.
b) Prakash Karat and Sitaram Yechury were shunted aside and Jyoti Basu took over.
c) Raj Nath Singh sidelined and Atal Behari Vajpayee re-emerged.

For the first time the posturing of boybosses Karat and Yechury took a severe beating when party cadres began saying that the two were not mass leaders but rather creations of the media.

7. Mid-term poll?

Temporarily deferred but politically inevitable.

8. Election issues:

Congress will convert the 123 controversy into an *aam admi* issue and champion it as a pro-poor doctrine – "*har garib ki jhopri mein jalega* bulb", and paint the Left as anti-national (for playing into the hands of China and Pakistan) and anti-development. The Left will skirt this issue and run on a pro-Muslim image in an attempt to emerge as a champion of secular forces.
BJP – In search of a leader and an issue.
Third Front – Only issue before them is to use all means to unite themselves and remain politically alive. g

lear technology to India the next 20 years but today scientists have started using thorium

Executive privilege…

Continued from page 7

be a "sense of the House" resolution. This posturing flies in the face of the express provisions in the Constitution. As Justice Reddy argues, Clause (3) of Article 75 states that "the Council of Ministers shall be collectively responsible to the House of People" and therefore it follows that every sphere of activity of the executive is accountable to Parliament. Thus, Parliament has unrestricted power derived from the Constitution not only to examine but, if it chooses to do so, approve or reject any international agreement or treaty.

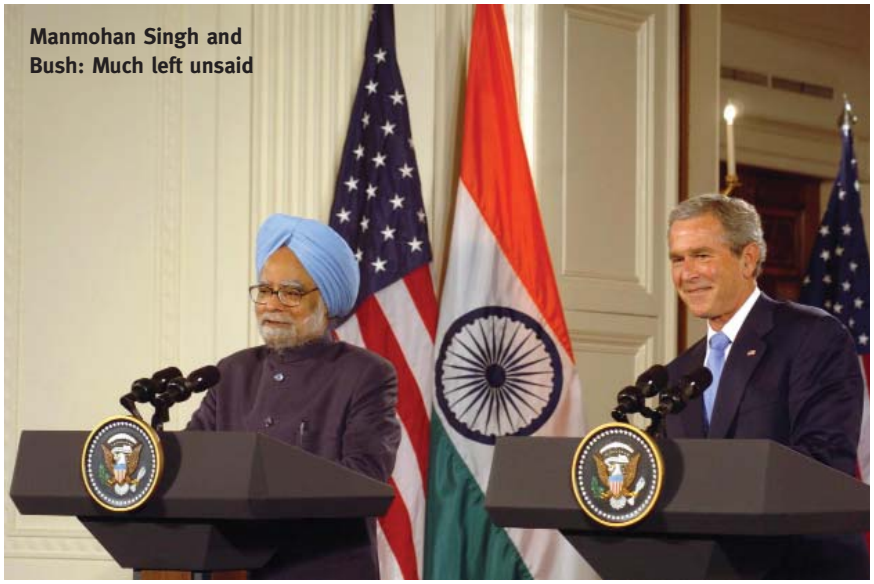
The context and manner in which the 123 Agreement has been negotiated makes it imperative for Parliament to insist on a substantive discussion on and approve or reject, as the case may be, all international agreements before they become operationalized.

In the case of the 123 Agreement, the first thing that strikes one is that the whole process of negotiation has been asymmetrical. On the US side, both the executive and the legislative branch had been involved in laying out the framework for the agreement and that accounts why a whole lot of extraneous issues like relations with Iran have been incorporated into the Hyde Act which is the US national law which will govern the 123 Agreement despite our government's assertions to the contrary. Besides, the agreement now reached between the two governments will again come up before the US Congress for final approval before it is operationalized.

Now look at the Indian side. The negotiations had involved only a handful of people with no input whatsoever from the legislature. The general attitude has been disdainful of the opinion within India as exemplified by the Prime Minister when he told the Left parties that either they accept the agreement or lump it. It was even implied that those who questioned the government's wisdom were lacking in patriotism. There has not been any major substantive discussion on the issue in Parliament; the Prime

Continued on page 11

This is similar to the seminal issue underlying Watergate – Nixon's invocation of the self-christened doctrine of 'executive privilege' that hit at the principle of separation of powers



Manmohan Singh and Bush: Much left unsaid

PIB

Nuclear power is costly, unsafe, risk-prone and ineffective in combating global warming. The US will not meet the basic obligation of uninterrupted fuel supply

Energy security...

Continued from page 8

agenda of garnering $100-billion business in India's power sector!

Starting from the early 1990s, USAID has been dominating the dialogue on India's power sector reforms. It was this agency that was responsible for dumping the energy efficiency / renewable energy approach and instead adopting a supply-sided restructuring model suggested by certain US consulting companies.

Under this model, State Electricity Boards were to be dismantled and turned into "independent organizations" with "unbundled functions". These entities were to be privatized to facilitate US power utilities' taking them over. Despite full backing and funding by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, this move did not succeed.

To make this happen by triggering the market, the Electricity Act, 2003 introduced the "open access" mechanism. Under this, theoretically, any generator can sell to any consumer and any consumer can buy from any generator. This also has not taken off.

Both the "restructuring" and "open access" models were meant to pursue a private benefit agenda of "quest for profit". The former favoured privatization and Independent Power Projects. The latter facilitated IPPs cherry-picking high tariff-paying customers, leaving the others in the lurch. Yet the $100-billion business did not materialize.

So the "reformers" have now taken the nuclear route through the 123 Agreement and are enacting a big charade to sell it to the gullible public. Manmohan Singh addressed the US Congress in July 2005, pleading for the nuclear deal and stating that US investment could spur India's economic growth and bring in $100 billion in the next decade for nuclear power plants!

This was done despite the fact that India has several options in the energy field that can give the needed security without compromising its sovereignty. These include gasification combined cycle process for clean and efficient coal-fuelled generation that has huge potential; pithead clean-coal power plants; coastal plants with imported coal; large, massive untapped renewable sources of energy including hydro power; reducing energy intensity and substantially augmenting efficiency in the use of energy resources and generated power; accelerated domestic oil / gas exploration; alternative energy technologies like hydrogen fuel and the Indo-Iran gas pipeline.

As it transpires, the real agenda seems to be energy security for the US and not India! The growing energy demands of the Indian and Chinese economies had raised concerns among US policy-makers on the impact of global energy availability. The Indian shift toward nuclear energy is in the best interests of America to secure its energy needs of coal, crude oil, and natural gas. Hence the deal. The $100-billion business for US companies in India is only icing on the cake!

Yet the Prime Minister insists that the deal is "honourable" and in India's national interest! **g**

ILLUSTRATION: ARUNA

The Indian side displayed Machiavelian secrecy and sought to mould opinion, rather unsuccessfully, through media briefings and leaks to friendly journalists and hangers-on

Executive privilege…

Continued from page 9

Minister has made two *suo moto* statements with a number of promises which his critics say he has failed to fulfil.

As a result of this, the process was relatively more transparent in the US and the public and informed circles in India received most of their information from US discussions and debate rather than the Indian side. Instead, the Indian side displayed Machiavelian secrecy and sought to mould opinion, rather unsuccessfully, through selective media briefings and leaks to friendly journalists and other hangers-on.

It therefore defies logic that the executive has been reluctant to have any substantive discussion on an agreement which will impact and influence in a substantive manner the economic, political, military, strategic, foreign and energy policies of the country over the next 40 years. Besides, this agreement has seriously fractured the broad consensus the country had enjoyed over foreign policy for the last 60 years. Hence the pathetic show with walkouts and shouting in both Houses of Parliament on August 13, 2007 when the Prime Minister rose to defend the agreement.

The previous practice of merely informing Parliament, as in the case of the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty (which is being quoted as a precedent), belonged to a different era when a single party dominated Parliament. Currently, where minority coalitions rule with support from outside, Parliament must exercise its due Constitutional right and hold the executive accountable for all its actions. The Executive mindset needs to be reminded that the days of dictatorship of the executive are over. Threats of resignation or a show of peevish stubbornness cannot wish away the fundamental Constitutional reality which is the principle of accountability of the executive to Parliament. g

INDIAN ADMINISTRATIVE

METCALFE HOUSE

11TH DECE

From Left to Right:—

Sitting :— Messrs. A. Banerji (Admin. Officer), P. Roy (Reader i
R. Gopalaswamy I C S, (Jt. Secretary, Ministry of Ho
(Home Minister), H. V. R Iyengar I.C.S., (Secretary
Home), J. S. Lall I.C.S. (Vice Principal), B. Vohra

1st. Row Standing :— Messrs. M. M. Kushari, Y. Krishen, Gian Prakash
R. Tirumalai, G. Jagatpati, S. M. H. Burney, P.

2nd Row Standing :— Messrs. R. Prasad, K. N. Srivastava, Subhas K. Mu
A. K. Sen, P. C. Bhagat, M. G. Balasubramainam,

3rd Row Standing :— Messrs. A. Mozoomdar, B. B. Srivastava, G. S. Si
East Punjab), R. Venkatachalam, T.C.A. Srinivas
H.K.L. Capoor.

SERVICE TRAINING SCHOOL

E HUTMENTS, DELHI

EMBER 1948.

in Economics), Khan Bahadur S. M. Munir Bar-at-Law (Law Lecturer), ne Affairs), S. B. Bapat I.C.S., (Principal), Hon'ble Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel , Ministry of Home Affairs), V. Shankar I.C.S., (P. S. to Hon'ble Minister, and Dr. S. K. Rau.

, Krishen Kishore, Shunil K. Mukerjei, B. D. Jayal, Saran Singh. J. Fernandes, K. S. Narang, S. Banerji and J. C. Sengupta.

kherjee, K. L. Pasricha, V. Karthikeyan, S. K. Guha, K. Suryanarainan, K. P. Singh, S. Chidambaram and Capt. A. D. Moddie.

al, F.F. Dias (Mess Contractor), Kulwant Singh P.C.S. (on deputation from savaradhan, K. Ramamurthi, J. C. Agarwal, K. G. Raghava Iyer and

RANGOON STUDIO
New Delhi.

Tina Dixit sitting pretty
high command quandary

LET us hark back to the time when that formidable gang of three – HKL Bhagat, Jagdish Tytler and Sajjan Kumar – was dictating terms in Congress party politics. The High Command imported the daughter-in-law of party veteran Umashankar Dixit to Delhi from Uttar Pradesh to get rid of the trio. Sheila Dixit was brought in as the state Congress president and, after victory in the Assembly polls, was anointed Chief Minister in December 1998.

In her second term as CM, she has become a thorn in the side of that very same High Command which can neither contain nor jettison her. Worsening civic amenities, corruption in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, skyrocketing vegetable prices, "killer" Blueline buses, unending power cuts, eternally dry taps in more than half of Delhi, defeat in the local body elections, infighting among the party cadre are all being attributed to her lackadaisical style of functioning. Besides, tales of nepotism and corruption by her kith and kin have also reached 10 Janpath.

Worst of all, Dixit's utterances against the people of Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh, blaming them for Delhi's plight, sent shockwaves through the party headquarters for political reasons. A damage control exercise was launched immediately to woo the massive block of Bihari voters in Delhi. The victory of Mayawati's party, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), in municipal elections in a number of Congress strongholds has also given sleepless nights to the party High Command. Political analysts attribute the BSP's rise to Dixit's deliberate neglect of Dalit IAS officers.

The state Congress leaders have long been wondering what trump card is proving Dixit's shield against the wrath of the Congress High Command. Lately there has come a disclosure that it is the convenient TINA (There Is No Alternative) factor that is bailing her out over and again. It had never occurred to her opponents. Better late than never, they are now working on a sting operation and are quite sure Dixit's days are numbered.

Chidambaram cooks sugar scenario
bittersweet flavour

STRANGE, but deliberate, are the ways of Union Finance Minister P Chidambaram to contain the rate of inflation by assigning a much higher weightage to sugar vis-à-vis food crops in the Wholesale Price Index (WPI). The sugar sector has been at the receiving end since the beginning of the sugar season last year. Sugar prices registered a 20-25 per cent decline within three months. The situation worsened when the government increased the minimum price payable to the sugarcane farmers and followed it with a further increase in various states through notifications. The sharp increase in cost of production and steep fall in sugar prices rendered the sugar industry unviable.

When sugar prices declined last year in the domestic and global markets, the sector was set to reap the export boom for the first time. But the government banned its export. The reason given was that the increase in sugar prices was causing inflationary pressure on the economy. However, figures spoke otherwise. The sugar price index – at 108 in mid-February – had declined to about 100 in mid-July (base January 1, 2006). The declining sugar prices were unfairly utilized to create a negative impact on WPI at the cost of the sugar industry. This suited Chidambaram's objective of containing general inflation on paper. And perhaps the unjustified higher weightage of 3.6 per cent given to sugar in the index made his job easy.

Magnanimous Ansari
easygoing vp

Hamid Ansari, the new Vice-President of India, is a known face on television, and in academic and diplomatic circles. But this apolitical figure had minimal experience of dealing with traditional Congress workers. That is, until his campaign for election to this august office.

Although Ansari's victory was a foregone conclusion, he was unwilling to take any chances and contacted potential voters and Congress leaders personally. Three days before polling, he called the office of Congress veteran Mohsina Kidwai, Rajya Sabha member and former Central minister, at her residence.

Prashant Kumar Sharma, her parliamentary representative and a Youth Congress worker, took the call. Ansari introduced himself as just that – "Ansari" – and asked to be put through to Kidwai. But Sharma sought to know the caller's full name and location. The suave Ansari laughed and said the introduction he had furnished was more than enough and again asked for the call to be forwarded.

In the next few moments, a verbal tug of war ensued. Finally, Sharma said in a rough

ILLUSTRATIONS: ARUNA

tone that unless the caller disclosed his full name and location, he would not be connected to Kidwai. Ansari yielded and finally got to speak to her.

The next day, Ansari came to Kidwai's residence and spent an hour with her in discussions. Coming out after the meeting, Ansari asked for Sharma. The staff panicked as everyone thought Sharma was going to be ticked off for misbehaviour. But the large-hearted Ansari walked down to the office and, as Sharma stood up to greet him, he affectionately patted him on the back and said, "Well done, boy. Meet me any time you like. Leaders need workers like you."

Travails of being Laloo's guru

socialism-chara divide

Satpal Malik, a former MP and a socialist to the core, was the blue-eyed boy of Chaudhry Charan Singh. In the early 1970s, whenever the Mandal beneficiaries came to meet Singh, they felt privileged to get political lessons from Malik. Later, circumstances led them to becoming Chief Ministers and Central Ministers. Among them is the controversial Laloo Prasad Yadav, who founded and promoted the "chara" school of thought during his days as Chief Minister of Bihar. A few days ago, Laloo saw Malik in the Central Hall of Parliament and rushed towards him. After initial greetings, Laloo expressed his sadness over the fact that his political guru had never met him during his long innings as Bihar Chief Minister or as Railways Minister.

Malik, knowing well the tale of the rise of his one-time political trainee and his about-turn from the socialist path, smiled without comment. Laloo would not relent, reiterating that Malik should see him if he needed anything done and promising to repay his long overdue debt. Those nearby who were eavesdropping on the conversation immediately latched onto Malik to try and get work done through him. Malik is having a hard time avoiding them since. g

Early steps of young India

The 1948-batch civil servant recalls inspiring leaders as well as a career devoted to putting a newly-independent nation on its feet

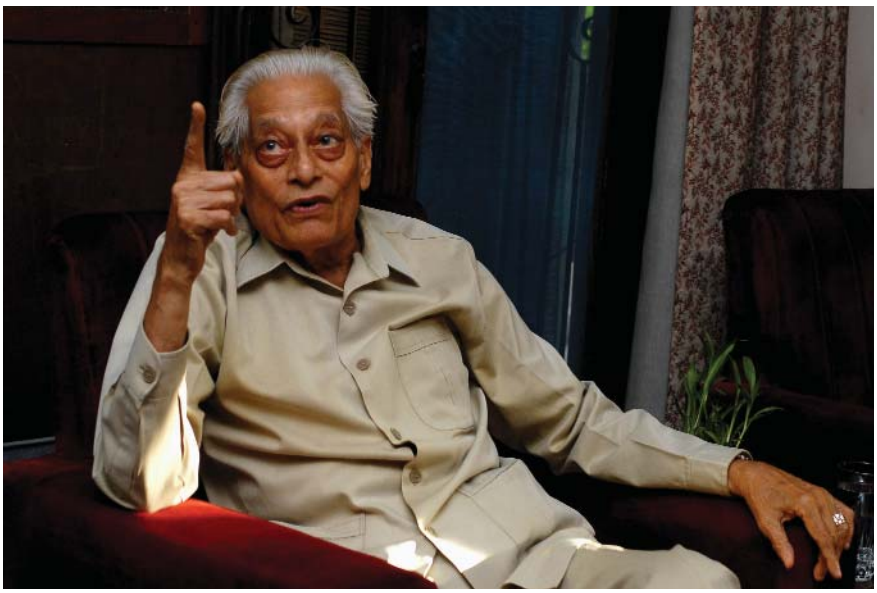
I EARNED an MSc in physics in 1946 and was pursuing further research. My research guide, Sir KS Krishnan, was doing collaborative research with the renowned scientist, CV Raman. One fine morning, in April 1947, I saw the advertisement for the Indian Administrative Services. The last exam for the ICS had been held in 1944 and, after a gap of three years, brilliant students across the country were waiting to appear for the IAS exam. I too tried my luck in the first IAS exam held between July 20 and August 7, 1947. After the exams, I was appointed a lecturer in Allahabad University and thought of continuing with academics, my prime interest.

On August 15, 1947, I travelled to Delhi to witness the historic event of Lord Mountbatten bringing down the British flag along with Jawaharlal Nehru and the Tricolour being hoisted. I still recall it vividly. I returned to Allahabad and became engrossed in studies. The results of the IAS exam came out in March 1948. Topper Venkateswaran opted for the Indian Foreign Service. Tirumalai was second and Rajeshwar Prasad third. Sushital Banerjee ranked fourth, followed by me.

The selected candidates came to Metcalfe House, Delhi, for training and stayed in hutments with the Yamuna flowing nearby. On a full moon day, Nehru came to meet us. We were thrilled to find him amongst us. He asked which lunar day it was. Everyone said, "Purnima." But Sunil Mukherjee said it was Buddha's Nirvana Day. Nehru seemed to like the answer. I also recall the visit of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Home Minister and the greatest advocate of the IAS. He was unwell and sat on the sofa. He said, "All of you undergoing training have been provided security of life and family by the country. Now it is your turn to repay the debt." Then he elaborated the importance of the service: "You will become so important and busy in the coming days that we shall not be able to address all of you on a single day and under one roof again." While we were talking to him, a message came that the Maharaja of Jaipur and the Nawab of Bhopal wanted to see him urgently. We went to the garden and watched. Sardar Patel was seated on a chair, truly looking an iron man. The Nawab of Bhopal was bending, whispering in his ear while the Maharaja knelt on the other side and waited for his turn to speak.

Our training got over and I joined the UP cadre. I was posted as Joint Magistrate, Etawah in 1948. I would go to villages, meet people, listen to their grievances and settle them on the spot. My wife accompanied me on my visits. Once, at Rae Bareli, I took a boat to reach a remote village. On the way, I saw a sadhu sanctifying an idol with holy water. My wife asked if he would give her the idol for worship at home. He said that a number of such idols were lying in the fields and she could pick up one. We found plenty. The incident led to study of antiques becoming my hobby. I later became a collector of antiques.

When Sampoornanand was Chief Minister, I was appointed Additional Director of a relatively new department, Heavy Industries. Realizing the immense untapped potential this sector had for the development of the state, I made a 15-year dynamic plan, with 27 groups of experts. The Jawaharpur Heavy Electric Plant, the Hindustan



SHARAD SAXENA

Srivastava: Momentous innings

The caste system has been exploited. I call upon the new generation of civil servants to shed the fear of transfers and say no to unfair diktats

Aluminum plant and an antibiotics factory, a joint venture with the then Soviet Union at Rishikesh, were established during this period. But after I left, the 15-year plan was not followed up.

I became Chief Secretary in December 1976 and worked for 15 months. It was a difficult period. The Janata Party came to power and Ram Naresh Yadav became CM. I left the state for Delhi and was appointed Secretary, Department of Statistics. I suggested merger of the post of Registrar-General of the Census of India, which functioned under the Home Ministry, with the Statistics Department. Lord Curzon formed this department in 1905 and it was logical to merge it with the Statistics Department, whose work was similar.

During my four-year tenure in the Ministry of Family Planning as Joint Secretary, I restructured and established the entire set-up. A road map of the family planning programme was prepared and family welfare centres established across India. The programme was moving steadily on the right track. A single overenthusiastic act by Sanjay Gandhi derailed it during the Emergency. We have not been able to revive it since.

The present IAS lot is sharper, intelligent and more energetic. Their canvas is much bigger than ours. But they lack interaction with the masses. This should be addressed on priority. I often wonder why we have not been able to take the poor of this country along with us. We know the reason yet are helpless to do anything about it. The caste system has been exploited. I call upon the new generation of civil servants to shed the fear of transfers and say no to unfair diktats. In spite of many drawbacks, and ups and downs in the growth of the Indian economy, I see a silver lining. India is developing very fast in the right direction. We only need to be cautious and keep the welfare of the downtrodden at the centre of all our developmental planning and implementation. The biggest asset is the love and affection of the people with whom civil servants work. g

(Kripa Narayan Srivastava was Health Secretary, Government of India, Chief Secretary of UP and Goa, and Vice-Chancellor, Pant Agriculture University)

TRACKING

For a complete list of appointments & retirements, see www.indianbuzz.com or www.gfiles.info

AJAY CHADDHA
The 1977-batch IPS officer of AGMUT cadre has been appointed the first DGP of Arunachal Pradesh.

FALGUNI RAJKUMAR
The 1972-batch IAS officer of Karnataka is now Secretary, North Eastern Council Secretariat, Shillong.

SHEELBHADRA BANERJEE
The 1971-batch IAS officer of Andhra Pradesh has become the new Secretary, Tourism to the Government of India.

BD RAM
The 1972-batch IPS officer belonging to Jharkhand has been appointed DGP in Jharkhand, in his second tenure as DGP.

RAVI MITTAL
The 1986-batch IAS officer of Bihar is now Joint Secretary, Planning in the Government of India.

PRABHAT SHUKLA
The 1974-batch IFS officer has been appointed India's next Ambassador to Russia.

D CHAKRAVARTI
The 1977-batch IFS officer has been appointed India's new Ambassador to Romania.

ALOK SHEEL
The 1982-batch IAS officer of Kerala has joined the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council.

T CHANDRASEKHAR
The 1987-batch IAS officer of Maharashtra is the new MD and Vice-President of Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority.

ARUN YADAV
The 1987-batch IAS officer of Sikkim is now Joint Secretary, Home in the Government of India.

KULDEEP GOEL
The 1971-batch ITS officer is the new Chairman and Managing Director of BSNL, appointed for five years.

MALA DUTT
The 1986-batch IES officer has been appointed Director in the Cabinet Secretariat.

BB PANDIT
The 1977-batch IA&AS officer has been appointed Director General of Defence Audit.

AN SINGH
The retired 1966-batch IPS officer of Madhya Pradesh is now Chairman of the Maulana Azad College of Technology, Bhopal.

ARCHANA DUTTA
The 1983-batch IISO officer has been appointed Chief of Public Relations to the President of India.

DP SRIVASTAVA
The 1978-batch IFS officer has been appointed India's next Ambassador to the Czech Republic.

ROSHAN SAHAY
The 1979-batch IRS officer has joined the ADB. He was earlier OSD to Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha.

PREM PRAKASH SHARMA
The 1971-batch IAS officer of Jharkhand has been appointed Chief Secretary of Jharkhand

Moving On: ias officers retiring in september

CHHATTISGARH
Kalyan Kumar Chakravarty (1970)

GUJARAT
Shilaben L Benjamin (1994)

HARYANA
Naseem Ahmad (1972)

JHARKHAND
A K Mishra (1970)
Anjani Kumar (1989)

JAMMU & KASHMIR
Amit Kushari (1970)

KARNATAKA
G R Prem Kumar (1976)

MADHYA PRADESH
Ajit Raizada (1970)

MANIPUR-TRIPURA
Dibakar Chakraborthy (1986)

ORISSA
Debendra Chandra Mishra (1989)

PUNJAB
Ranjit Singh (1991)

TAMIL NADU
L N Vijayaraghavan (1972)

UTTAR PRADESH
N A Viswanathan (1972)
Satyendra Nath Mishra (1992)

UNION TERRITORIES
Lalit Sharma

IAS officers' birthdays | September 2007

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IPS officers' birthdays | September 2007

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by ARUN LAVANIA

Green fingers in the lab

AFTER engineering the Green Revolution in wheat and rice in the 1970s, the scientists of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), Delhi, are set to repeat their success story with fruits. Prominent among them is Dr AK Singh of the Indian Agricultural Research Service, the youngest-ever head of the Division of Fruits and Horticultural Technology.

Singh has achieved many goals in his career. "With a rural background from eastern Uttar Pradesh, I reached Delhi in 1983 and was selected for MSc in horticulture at IARI. The architect of the Green Revolution, Dr MS Swaminathan, was my role model and IARI was my dream," he recalls modestly but fondly.

Most of the commercial varieties of mango are salt-sensitive and alkaline soil adversely affects crop yield. This problem has posed a great challenge to the country's agricultural scientists. Singh took up this challenge and the first two years of his research during post-graduation resulted in assessment of a number of germ plasms inherently resistant to saline conditions, which is now significantly boosting mango production. The Division of Fruits and Horticultural Technology, utilizing his research findings, has embarked on an ambitious project to assess more such germ plasms.

During PhD work at the same department, he shifted focus to another high-value crop – grapes. Through tissue culture technology, he was able to develop micro propagation protocol for large-scale multiplication of elite varieties of grapes. A large number of tissue culture-raised plants were successfully transplanted and gave excellent yields.

Using tissue culture, he was able to produce over a million plants of different horticultural species and execute their adoption across the country

Following his doctorate, Singh joined the Indian Agricultural Research Service and travelled to other countries for his continuing research. He spent seven years at the Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI), Delhi, and, using tissue culture again, was able to produce over a million plants of different horticultural species and execute their adoption across the country. Thus, mass propagation of horticultural crops became a success story in India.

The scientist's research stint at the University of California saw him identifying 102 genes while studying the use of citrus gene chip. These identified genes are induced after virus invasion of citrus plants. The Quick Decline viral disease of citrus plants is the single most serious disease of commercial citrus crops globally. Singh's work in this area has provided insight into the citrus-virus interaction at the level of gene expression. This, coupled with the fundamental plant defence mechanism against Quick Decline, is of vital importance in developing new strategies to protect citrus orchards from this deadly disease.

Aptly called a scientist of the soil, Singh left lucrative foreign and private assignments to work in India's interest. He asserts that the Indian agricultural research system is comparable with its counterparts in developed nations, and actually better in many respects.

SHARAD SAXENA

Dr AK Singh: Plant wizard

Singh has made a significant contribution to DNA fingerprinting of indigenous fruit crops. Using DNA markers, he described the distinctive characteristics of the DNA of the ber fruit. It is the genes of ber that enable it to grow in harsh conditions.

He is also a consultant and Member Secretary, National Task Force, Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority – involved with developing DUS (Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability) test guidelines for mango, guava, litchi and banana.

This taskforce has been constituted mainly because India is a signatory to WTO and is a very rich country in terms of biodiversity of fruit crops and a large numbers of non-fruit crops too. Currently Singh's focus is on building and utilizing genetic resources and conducting educational outreach in fruit crop genetics. g

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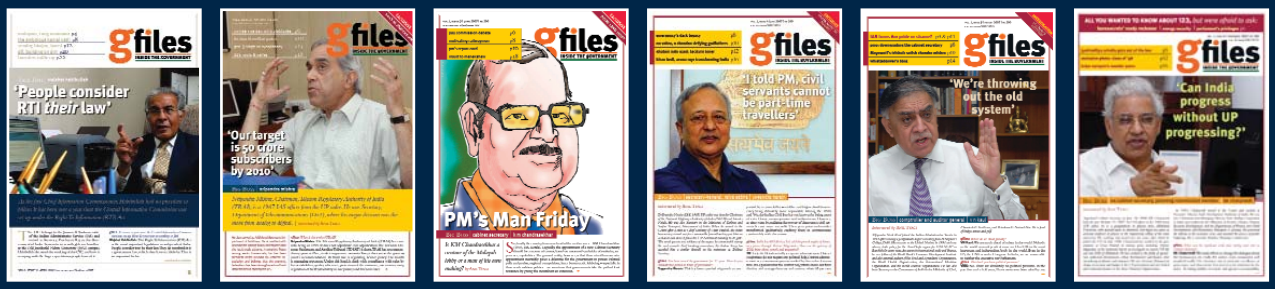
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Long-term investors can take stock

THE defaults in sub-prime mortgages and related securities in the US had considerable impact on the liquidity scenario the world over. This could have resulted in a major crash in the stock markets but for the intervention by the central banks, including the Federal Reserve which not only pumped in billions of dollars but also softened the interest rate. Though the situation appears to have been managed for the time being, the problem is likely to persist a while. Moreover, the crisis has made lenders more restrictive thereby making credit more expensive even for quality borrowers. Real estate prices are likely to go down further with lenders selling the houses lying as collateral with them. All this may create further uncertainties for interest rates, exchange rates, inflation and growth in general due to the impact it will have on consumer spending and export demand in the US.

Our stock markets are increasingly globally connected

Though the Indian economy is performing well and is expected to grow at a healthy rate of around 9 per cent, and our equity markets are likely to reflect this in the long run, globalization and increasing integration with international markets have led to Indian markets feeling the tremors of what happens abroad. Equities have fallen sharply as the global exposure of domestic stock markets is relatively much higher than the economy as a whole or the other key financial markets such as debt. This has happened due to two reasons. First, to expand their operations, Indian companies have increased their trade links abroad. They have been acquiring companies and borrowing actively overseas. Second, there has emerged a very large class of global institutions and funds that are active players in stocks, bonds and currencies across the world. They play a key role in stock market movements in a country like India. FIIs have pumped in nearly $60 billion (over Rs 2.5 lakh crore) in Indian equities so far and are major stakeholders in Indian companies. Since they look for best investment opportunities worldwide, any change in interest rates or stock prices at any of the major global markets has a bearing on their investment decisions for India.

The FIIs are unlikely to withdraw in a hurry. Nevertheless, the Indian stock market – to resume its upward journey – needs continued flow of liquidity. And recent global events can definitely interrupt these liquidity flows due to direct or indirect exposure of various FIIs, hedge funds and the like to mortgage securities in the US markets. Also, the domestic concerns of slowdown, strong rupee, interest rate, inflation and political uncertainty can further aggravate the situation. The latest downturn in Indian equities may, therefore, last for some time. But it still provides a good opportunity for long-term investors to take selective exposure and churn their portfolios. The rising savings coupled with low equity ownership of Indian households has significant potential. The percentage of savings to GDP is forecast to rise from 30 per cent in 2007 to 33 per cent by 2011. The proportion of financial savings within overall savings will rise from 17.3 per cent of GDP to 20 per cent during the same period. Investment in equities, mutual funds and debentures will rise from 3.8 per cent of financial savings to 15 per cent by 2011. This will provide a cushion for FII investments which in itself is likely to witness a quantum jump from $13.9 billion in 2007 to $64.9 billion by 2011 due to the relative attractiveness of the Indian market.

Indraprastha Gas Ltd (CMP Rs 109)

THE market, throughout the entire bull run, seems to have ignored a company that combines low risk with high growth prospects. IGL supplies compressed natural gas through a network of more than 150 gas stations across Delhi. The company also has a growing market for its piped natural gas and is expanding its operations in the National Capital Region. Its sourcing of natural gas at administered prices from GAIL and virtual monopoly in the Delhi market presents an effective entry barrier for competition. Practically no debt on its balance sheet coupled with pricing power to pass on any increase to its customers has seen the operating margins improve steadily. With assured volume growth, likely to accelerate in view of the 2010 Commonwealth Games, IGL's prospects appear bright.

Agro Dutch Industries Ltd (CMP Rs 26)

ADIL has emerged the dominant player in India for mushroom exports, producing 49,000 of the total 90,000 tonnes of the country's produce. The firm has a captive power plant and a manufacturing unit which provides a significant cost advantage. For 2006-07, it reported a net profit of Rs 18.17 crore on a turnover of Rs 205 crore, showing growth in sale of 45 per cent and in net profit by 50 per cent. For the quarter ending June 2007, it earned a net profit of Rs 8.8 crore – giving an EPS of Rs 2.89 on sales of Rs 55 crore as against the net profit of Rs 4 crore (EPS Rs.1.37) on sales revenue of Rs 52.7 crore for the same period last year. Besides large export orders, the company's business is likely to witness heightened growth due to entry of big corporates into organized retailing such as Reliance Fresh, Big Apple, Subhiksha, Bharti and so on. The stock will give handsome returns in six months to one year. g

The author has limited exposure to the stocks recommended with a long-term perspective. gfiles does not accept responsibility for investment decisions by readers of this column. Investment-related queries may be sent to gfilesindia@gmail.com with Dr Sood's name in the subject line.

Nitish fishes for Bihar officers

WITH a reputation for valuing governance, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is in need of upright officers to develop the state and rid it of the legacy of the previous regime of Laloo Prasad Yadav – known more for corruption and kidnappings than anything else. But there are not enough hands to implement developmental pro-

grammes as a large number of civil servants from the state cadre are overstaying their tenure of deputation at the Centre.

A CM can recall officers from Delhi and Nitish definitely wants them back. On his last visit to Delhi, he met the Minister in charge of the Department of Personnel and Training, Suresh Pachauri, and asked him to relieve the officers immediately. The minister agreed and told him to submit the names along with a formal request.

Elated, Nitish returned to Patna dreaming of a developed Bihar under his stewardship. But, when the news reached the concerned bureaucrats in Delhi, they were in a quandary. It transpires that they themselves are not the ones unwilling to go back and serve the state. The veto emanates from their other halves, terrified at the rampant kidnapping of civil servants' wives and daughters – again a part of the legacy of the previous regime.

To stave off an imminent return to Bihar, the hapless bureaucrats have decided to exercise their right to go on a year's study leave. It cannot be denied to them by any authority – Central or state. And so Nitish is left high and dry.

Rebuff on home turf for Lalli

THE dictum "As you sow, so shall you reap" came home rather bluntly to BS Lalli, a retired 1971-batch IAS officer of Uttar Pradesh who is currently the controversial Chief Executive Officer of Prasar Bharati.

Lalli secured a three-year term in Prasar Bharati a year ago but then began eyeing the chairmanship of the UP Public Service Commission under the new Mayawati government as that tenure would last five years. He thought UP Cabinet Secretary Shashank Shekhar Singh would be obliging. But Lalli was in for a shock when he went to see the former pilot in his office in Lucknow.

The Prasar Bharati CEO was asked to sit in the visitors' room and wait his turn like anyone else. After an hour, he was finally called in. By this time, he was fuming and in no mood to exchange initial pleasantries. He marched in and stated, "Mr Singh, I am the seniormost IAS officer of Uttar Pradesh and you

should not have kept me waiting so long."

But Singh has flown every important politician and bureaucrat of the state and there is very little that he doesn't know. He knows well how Lalli has been sidelined by the professionals in Doordarshan for being unable to learn even simple aspects of production. He retorted smilingly, "Your innings in UP is over. And I am too busy to meet anyone without appointment." And then he called for the next visitor to be sent in.

Bureaucrat to the aid of NCDEX

IT is no secret that corporates know how to manipulate a civil servant for their own benefit both before and after his retirement from the government post. The pity is that the common man invariably ends up the loser. The National Commodity Derivative Exchange (NCDEX) is the country's lone online commodity exchange promoted by national institutions. It is engaged in speculative trading of 157 agricultural commodities and claims that it does not have any vested interest in the commodity market.

However, when reports that only traders and not farmers were benefiting from the speculative trading were confirmed, the Union government banned futures trading in wheat, rice, *urd* and *tur*. It also set up a committee headed by eminent economist Abhijit Sen to look into the entire affair and judge if the ban was justified. Sen was Chairman of the Commission of

ILLUSTRATIONS: ARUNA

Agricultural Cost and Prices (CACP) from July 1997 to December 2000.

NCDEX lost no time in bringing in a retired Joint Secretary, Ministry of Food and Civil Supplies, onto its Board of Directors. The point was that this officer's stint in the ministry had coincided with Sen's tenure in the CACP. The man was also a member of a high-powered Foodgrain Committee chaired by Sen and so enjoyed a close rapport with him.

Having played its cards well (despite its declaration of not having any vested interest in the commodities market), NCDEX is now optimistic that the retired bureaucrat will bring about favourable recommendations by the Sen committee. And voila! The ban will be lifted.g

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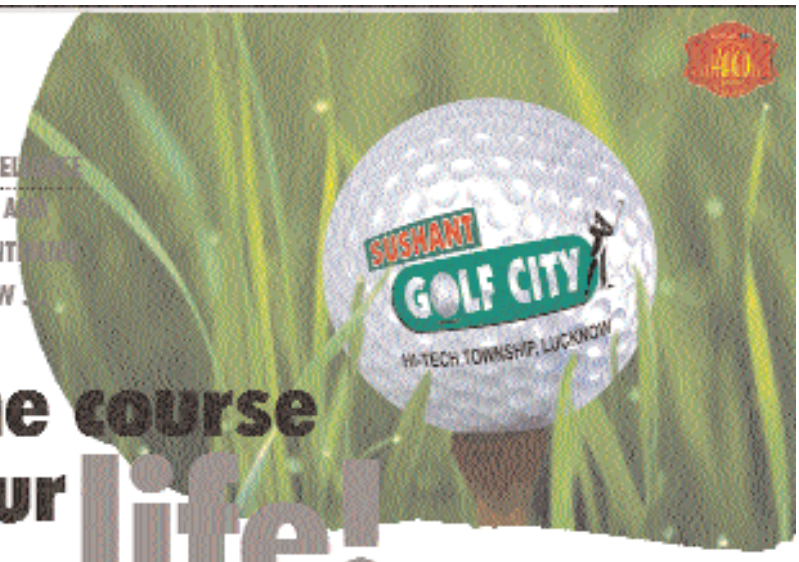

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